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GRASSHOPPER POISON
PROPERLY PLACED IS
NO MENACE TO BIRDS ✓

Grasshopper poisoning, now in progress in the Northern Plains States, following a Congressional appropriation for the purpose, can cause little or no injury to bird life, if properly carried on, says Clarence Cottam, assistant biologist of the Bureau of Biological Survey, in a statement issued today by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in response to a large number of inquiries as to the campaign's possible effects on birds.

During a two-weeks investigation at the height of the poisoning campaign of 1931 in the north-central prairie region, Mr. Cottam found no evidence of birds being poisoned where the arsenic bait was prepared and scattered broadcast, as recommended by the Bureau of Entomology. Bird fatalities, he found, were confined to isolated cases in places where the recommendations had been disregarded and the grasshopper bait left in piles.

To determine whether birds feeding on baited areas contained any of the arsenic intended for grasshoppers, Mr. Cottam, in fields recently poisoned, collected 25 individual birds of 8 species--western meadowlark, bronzed grackle, lark bunting, horned lark, chestnut-collared longspur, western mourning dove, western grasshopper sparrow, and English sparrow. Stomach examinations showed no evidence that the birds had eaten the poisoned bran used for bait. Grasshoppers comprised more than 60 percent of the total food, an average of 14 grasshoppers being found in each of the stomachs, but the quantity of poison consumed indirectly

with the insects was "so infinitesimally small as to be practically negligible."

Detailed chemical analyses for arsenic by the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils in the specimens collected by Mr. Cottam also produced negative results or showed quantities so minute as to be negligible, analyses of birds from areas where no baits had been distributed showing practically the same arsenic content as did those from poisoned fields.

Mr. Cottam tells of one farmer who had more than 800 chickens and turkeys feeding where grasshopper bait had been distributed, yet had not lost a fowl through poisoning. Over his 1,600-acre infested area, the farmer was reported to have scattered bait 12 times in 6 weeks.

"During my investigation," says Mr. Cottam, "I did not find a person who knew of any birds being killed by bait that was properly applied, and every person experienced in the poisoning work was emphatic in asserting that bait applied as directed by the Bureau of Entomology and made to the proper formula can cause little or no injury to wild life. It is my firm conviction that grasshopper poisoning, when properly carried on, can cause little or no injury to bird life. This however does not apply if the bait is placed out in piles."

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